



RECEIVED  
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

## United States Department of the Interior AUG 12 2003

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area  
401 West Hillcrest Drive  
Thousand Oaks, California 91360-4207

SMMC  
MALIBU

In reply refer to:  
N17 (SAMO)

August 8, 2003

Mr. Joseph T. Edmiston  
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy  
5750 Ramirez Canyon Road  
Malibu, California 90265

Dear Joe:

The National Park Service (NPS) at Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area is in the midst of developing an updated and comprehensive map of natural and urban-interface vegetation in the Santa Monica Mountains, Simi Hills, and surrounding areas. To date we have expended 16 months of work time and \$840,000 in field staff and contracting costs on the project. Unfortunately, much of the anticipated NPS funds for continuing the project next fiscal year have been substantially reduced. The potential impact of delaying this project at this time is great. Eleven months of field work remain to be completed and the already contracted photo interpretation and mapping services cannot proceed ahead with the information provided by the field crew. In addition, loss of our highly experienced field crew due to a break in funding would mean new technicians would need to be recruited and trained when funding is resumed, incurring a greater overall expense to the project and a potential reduction in map quality.

For these reasons we respectfully request that the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy consider granting \$100,000 to this project. These funds will allow us to maintain a core crew working on the project and complete the field work in a timely manner. Equally important, we believe that a significant contribution from one of our partners in the recreation area will convince the NPS of the importance of providing funds for the full crew to complete the field work. We have already discussed the project funding needs with Rori Skei and she recommended that we submit this formal request to you.

The benefits of this map to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and all agencies in the mountains are many. The primary objective of this project is to provide information necessary to identify and conduct ecologically sound hazard fuel reduction projects that will have the highest benefit to public safety while at the same time providing maximum protection of sensitive resources. The vegetation map will be used to develop detailed fire hazard and risk analyses for the mountains and, based on these analyses, will assist public and local fire management agencies to develop effective fire hazard management strategies while protecting resource values.

The map will also have many additional values for public and land conservation agencies in the region. The map will provide a highly detailed spatial assessment of native vegetation and as such will be a valuable planning tool where habitat connectivity, sensitive vegetation types (including wetlands) and protection of Ecologically Significant Habitat Areas are of concern. The map will also be extremely useful in meeting NEPA and CEQA compliance requirements for vegetation management and other land use decisions. The map will provide critical baseline information for assessing the impacts of development projects and for evaluating conservation lands and possible parkland acquisitions.

We realize that the Santa Monica Mountains may soon be involved in some critical land acquisitions and that your ability to fund other projects may be limited. But, we feel that your contribution to this project will be crucial in obtaining future NPS funding and that the map produced will be of great value to you. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Woody Smeck  
Superintendent

Attachments: Vegetation Mapping Synopsis  
Vegetation Mapping Study Area Map

✓ cc: Rorie Skei, SMMC

## **SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS & SIMI HILLS VEGETATION MAPPING SYNOPSIS**

### **Project Summary:**

The map will be at 1:12,000 scale with a minimum mapping area of 0.5 hectares (1.2 acres). The total mapped area will encompass 97,100 hectares (240,000 acres), from Griffith Park to Point Mugu State Park and from Simi Valley to the Malibu Coast. Mapped vegetation types will be classified to the association level following the Manual of California Vegetation (Sawyer and Keeler-Wolf) and the National Vegetation Classification Standard. Vegetation stands will also be described by shrub density and height. The vegetation classification is being developed by Todd Keeler-Wolf, California Department of Fish and Game Senior Vegetation Ecologist, working in conjunction with the California Native Plant Society. Aerial photograph interpretation and mapping is being performed by Aerial Information Systems (AIS, Redlands) and Earth Systems Research Institute (ESRI, Redlands) is providing project coordination. Ground survey support is being provided by National Park Service staff. Aerial photography for the project was acquired in July 2001 and field work began in July 2002. The expected completion date for field work is July 2004 and the final map will be delivered by December 2004.

### **Project Specifications:**

- Project area: 97,100 hectares
- Photography: 712 photos require photo-interpretation (1/12,000 scale)
- Field Crew: 5 biotechnicians (includes field scheduling and PI data coordinator)
- Park Support Staff: Plant Ecologist (project management, COR), GIS Specialist (project planning), Fire Ecologist (field sampling support), Fire GIS Specialist (TWINSPAN and cluster analyses for vegetation classification), 3 technicians (field sampling support).

### **Work completed:**

- Photography: Flown July 2001
- Grad-sect analysis: 90 grad-sect points defined, completed March 2002
- Preliminary photo interpretation: 78 photos completed as of 6/11/03
- Vegetation and mapping classifications: 80% final classifications as of 8/15/03
- Mapping classification: 80% final classification as of 7/8/03
- Completion of field data collection: July, 2004
- Completion of map and classification: October, 2004.

### **Costs expended to date:**

- FY01: \$287,751  
\$199,390 for ESRI Phase-1 contract: Vegetation classification & photo-interpretation  
\$88,361 for aerial photos
- FY02: \$354,764  
\$299,334 for ESRI Phase-2 contract: Photo-interpretation & partial map digitization  
\$55,430 for field crew salary & equipment
- FY03: \$198,000 for field crew salary & vehicles

### **Costs to complete the project:**

- Field Crew: \$180,300 for crew salary October 2003 through July 2004
- Contract: \$214,900 for ESRI Phase-3 contract to complete map digitization

# Santa Monica Mountains Vegetation Mapping Project

